

# The Post-Standard

## Aim Higher

### America needs long-term plan for reducing oil dependence

Monday, June 05, 2006

Signs of forward, long-term thinking are welcome ones when it comes to reducing foreign oil dependence and reducing high gas prices.

Case in point: Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton's recent call for a long-term plan to deal with the nation's fossil fuel addiction. Think ahead, Clinton said - far enough ahead so that the daily and weekly fluctuations don't distract us from the overall goal.

In a speech at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., last month, Clinton said the nation should set a goal to cut U.S. consumption of foreign oil in half by 2025; it also should chart a course to put ethanol-based fuel in 50 percent of the nation's gas stations by 2015.

And with the help of a government-business partnership, huge oil company profits should be used to create a \$50-billion fund to produce more efficient vehicles and encourage use of renewable sources of energy such as wind, solar and biofuels, Clinton said.

These are not new ideas, of course; but they are worth repeating and worth supporting for the long-term success of the nation's energy and security policies. With the recent \$3-per-gallon gas prices grabbing consumers' attention, now is the time to reach for changes.

When gas prices fall, the nation largely forgets about efforts to raise fuel efficiency. The advent of sport utility vehicles blinded many to fuel economy standards and gas-guzzling. That led to greater dependence on foreign oil.

With a long-term plan in place, it's more difficult to lose sight of the goal. Part of the overall effort must include higher corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards for cars and light trucks, as pushed by Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, R-New Hartford. With each vote in the House, his bill gathers more support.

With gas prices still high, it's time calls such as Boehlert's and Clinton's are heard.

The White House's recent rejection of legislation to reduce fuel efficiency levels across the board is a setback. A House bill backs a rise in the average standard for a fleet of new vehicles from 27.5 miles per gallon to 33 mpg over the next decade.

Research is showing fuel economy standards not only mean a cleaner environment and less dependence on foreign oil, but that it can be done without losing jobs or significantly raising prices.

With the environmental damage and political instability foreign oil dependence creates, the nation can hardly afford not to have a better long-term plan in place. Part of the overall effort must include higher corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards for cars and light trucks, as pushed by Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, R-New Hartford.